



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COUPLE CHARGED WITH INTERNATIONAL PARENTAL KIDNAPPING

PHOENIX, Ariz. -- Jessica Karin Heird, age 20, was charged here on June 7, 2006, with International Parental Kidnapping. Edward Henry Leader, age 37, was charged with Aiding and Abetting Heird in the commission of that crime.

U.S. Attorney Paul K. Charlton said, "Criminals tend to see the border as a line that law enforcement cannot cross. We can reach across the border, and this case shows that we will. We are grateful to the FBI, U.S. Marshals Service, Mohave County Sheriff's Office, San Diego County District Attorney's Office and the Clark County, Nevada, Family Services Department for their outstanding work on this case.

Special Agent in Charge John E. Lewis, of the FBI, Phoenix Division, stated, "It takes agencies working together to protect children and this case is a prime example. The Mohave County Sheriff's Office provided essential information to the FBI and the U.S. Marshals Service in order to locate the children. Additionally, it took the cooperation between law enforcement and community services such as Nevada Family Services and coordination with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children so that these young victims may not only be located, but also returned to safe and stable environments."

Last week, Mexican authorities, working in conjunction with the United States Marshals Service, took Heird and Leader into custody in Mexico. One son was among the children found with the couple when they were apprehended in Mexico.

In September, 2002, a Nevada court order made one son a ward of the Family Court, and placed him in the co-custody of Jessica and her parents, Angelika and Larry Heird. Jessica was last seen in the United States on November 21, 2002, when she left her parents' residence in Meadview, Arizona, with her two sons, who were 1 year and 2 months old at the time.

Prior to locating the couple in Mexico, law enforcement officials received information that Jessica had sold the 2-month-old for two months' rent to a person in Mexico who owned two ranches near Tijuana. They also received information that Jessica was still in Mexico and that she still had the 1-year-old.

After returning to the United States, Jessica admitted in a brief interview that she was aware of the court order placing her older son in the custody and care of her mother. She also admitted that she knew she was never free to leave Arizona with the children to flee into Mexico to live with Leader.

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A conviction for International Parental Kidnapping carries a maximum penalty of 3 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine or both. In determining an actual sentence, the district court judge will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

A criminal complaint is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the U.S. Marshal's Service in the Southern District of California and the District of Arizona, the FBI in the Southern District of California and the District of Arizona, the Mohave County Sheriff's Office, the San Diego County District Attorney's Office, and the Clark County, Nevada, Family Services Department. The prosecution is being handled by Bill C. Solomon, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: 06-6125M
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